September 2010
Local Government
FOCUS
Printed on recycled paper
From the Liberal Democrat Group at the Local Government Association
www.libdemgroup.local.gov.uk

Healthcare: a key role for councils

- The smoking ban in public buildings was a key example of a public health initiative that was started by local councils - meaning real improvements in people's health and saving the NHS money

The Coalition Government is consulting on plans for the Health Service, including giving responsibility for public health to councils.

Cllr David Rogers, lead Lib Dem member for Health and Social Care issues at the LGA said: "it is a real opportunity for local government to show it can take a leading and responsible role in helping improve people's health. And as a Liberal Democrat I am pleased to see local people being given more control over an issue that affects their lives".

Leading Lib Dem councillors with responsibility for social care and health issues have already met to discuss the plans with Lib Dem Health Minister Paul Burstow MP.

Lib Dem Group Leader Cllr Richard Kemp added: "We strongly believe that Lib Dem councillors should not wait for legislation but should encourage their councils to set up or strengthen exisiting arrangements to bring together council and health services under local democratic accountability".

LGA Liberal Democrats want councils to work with GPs to ensure that commissioning of local health services draws upon existing public sector expertise and is closely matched with what already works locally and with unmet needs.

Have your say

A Department of Health consultation document on health and social care can be found at http://tinyurl.com/35cn2kh and a Lib Dem consultation document on Health and Social Care can be found at: http://tinyurl.com/2etn64w

The new Government: 3 key facts

- The previous government's legacy of debt is equivalent to everyone in the country owing £22,400 and the UK has been left with one of the worst budget deficits in western Europe.
- Labour would not support the pupil premium during negotiations to decide who would form the new government - but the Lib Dems ensured extra funding would be found for this.
- Labour planned for a VAT rise and at least £50 billion of spending cuts - but have so far failed to say what they would cut.

OFFICE CONTACTS

Alanna Coombes, Head of Office
alanna.coombes@local.gov.uk
Rob Banks, Political Advisor
rob.banks@local.gov.uk
Jake Beavan, Political Advisor
jake.beavan@local.gov.uk
Evelyn Mark, Office Manager
evelyn.mark@local.gov.uk
Please note new email addresses
Or phone 020 7664 3204

A busy summer...

The LGA Lib Dem Group have been working throughout the summer in getting leading Lib Dem Councillors and MPs working and meeting together. In addition to hosting the Lib Dem Local Government Conference with ALDC at Local Government House, we organised a range of meetings at the LGA conference and hosted an away day for leading councillors, MPs and peers.

• Cambridge City Leader Cllr Sian Reid, Local Government Spokesperson Lord Tope and Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Chris Huhne, taking part in a panel debate at the LGA conference

• Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg MP and LGA Group Leader Richard Kemp listen to Newcastle Councillor (and now Lord) John Shipley at the LGA during July's meeting of MPs, Peers and Councillors at Local Government House

• ...and the LGA Liberal Democrat Group have been busy drawing up plans for the forthcoming year - including the spending review and a raft of new legislation

SEN - your views welcome

Sarah Teather, Liberal Democrat Minister for Children and Families, is asking for views about how the current system of providing support and education for children with special educational needs could be improved. The views will feed into a Government Green Paper to be published later this autumn.

Sarah said "Children with special educational needs should have the same opportunities as others. But the current system is so adversarial that too often this doesn't happen. I want parents, teachers, charities, teaching unions and Local Authorities to come forward with the changes they think are needed to make the system better for children with SEN and their families".

"I want to hear from anyone who has experienced services for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities – those who use them, and those who provide, or commission them. People's perspectives are varied and understandably deeply felt. I want everyone to have their say, and the opportunity to influence our future direction".

Liberal Democrat councillors will have lots of experience of how the system works in their own councils, and how it could be improved, so please do use this opportunity to tell Sarah Teather your views. You might also wish to promote the consultation to Lib Dem school governors in your area, many of whom will be considering these issues on a day-to-day basis.

The consultation can be found at http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/ . It is open from 10th Sept – 15th October.

New backbench Lib Dem Committees

Liberal Democrats in Parliament have set up parliamentary committees to help co-ordinate the party's work across a wide range of issues, and the LGA Liberal Democrat Group will be supporting their work and helping represent the view of Liberal Democrats in Local Government.

Key areas of interest for Local Government are as follows:

Team	Committee Chairs and lead Councillor
Business	Lorely Burt MP and Lord Razzall LGA Group Lead: Cllr Heather Kidd
Local Government	Simon Hughes MP and Lord Tope LGA Group Lead: Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson
Culture, Media & Sport	Don Foster MP and Baroness Bonham Carter LGA Group Lead: Cllr Chris White
Education	Dan Rogerson MP and Baroness Walmsley LGA Group Lead: Cllr David Bellotti
Energy & Climate Change	Andrew George MP and Lord Teverson LGA Group Lead: Mayor Dorothy Thornhill
Environment & Rural Affairs	Andrew George MP and Lord Greaves LGA Group Lead: Mayor Dorothy Thornhill
International and Europe	Tim Farron MP and Baroness Falkner LGA Group Lead: Cllr Richard Kemp
Health	John Pugh MP and Lord Alderdice LGA Group Lead: Cllr David Rogers
Home Office	Tom Brake MP and Baroness Hamwee LGA Group Lead: Cllr Duwayne Brooks
Justice	Tom Brake MP and Lord Thomas of Gresford LGA Group Lead: Cllr Duwayne Brooks
Transport	Martin Horwood MP and Lord Bradshaw LGA Group Lead: Cllr Richard Knowles
Treasury	Stephen Williams MP and Lord Newby LGA Group Lead: Cllr Richard Kemp
Work and Pensions	Jenny Willott MP, Lords rep t.b.c LGA Group Lead: Cllr Steve Comer

Key bills coming up...

In addition to October's spending review, this autumn sees key bills coming up which will affect local councils. A full briefing is available at http://tinyurl.com/3amqr4z

Bills include:

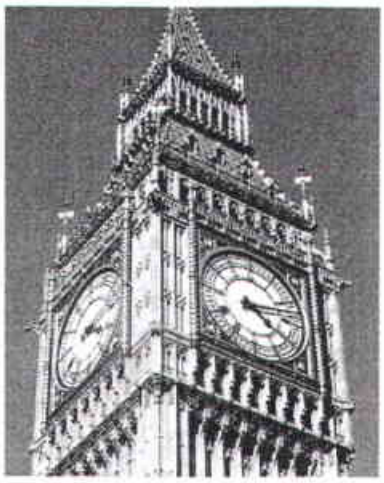
Decentralisation and Localism Bill
This will devolve greater powers to councils and local communities, specifically to give communities greater control over housing and planning decisions. It includes:
- a power of general competence for councils
- scrapping the Standards Board regime
- review the Housing Revenue Account

Some measures have already been announced, for instance Andrew Stunell MP as Lib Dem local government minister has scrapped the rule prohibiting councillors from taking part in a planning decision or other decisions simply because they have expressed a view about it beforehand.

Education and Children Bill
- establishes the "pupil premium"
- will allow different groups, including parents, to start and run state schools.

The LGA has already said that councils must retain a key strategic role - including ensuring a fair admissions policy in all local schools, and delivers a place for all local children and young people - including those with special educational needs.

Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill
This bill includes measures to make the police more accountable through a directly elected individual and further reforms to the licensing regime. The LGA Liberal Democrat Group



continues to oppose this and believes that it is better to have police authorities composed of locally elected councillors. We are concerned that the proposal for a directly elected commissioner will undermine existing local partnerships.

Local Government Association

LGA Lib Dem Budget Conference

Friday 22nd October - Local Government House, Smith Square, Westminster

Is your council going to have a tough time with its budget? Would you like help and to know how to get the politics right? Would you like to know the effect of the Comprehensive Spending Review on Local Government?

These questions can be answered in a one day session run by the LGA Lib Dem Group on Friday 22nd October - two days after the Comprehensive Spending Review. All Lib Dem Councillors welcome.

I wish to attend the conference at £25 per person. Please complete the details below:

Name of person attending	Authority	Email	Phone
1.			
2.			
3.			

☐ I enclose a cheque made payable to "Local Government Association" - VAT registration number 676078107 *(please give details below)*

☐ I would like you to invoice me personally *(please give details below)*

Name: ..... Address: .....

.....

E-mail:..... Local authority: .....

Telephone (including on the day mobile): .....

☐ I would like you to invoice my authority, please provide a purchase order number:
PO Number:

☐ I have the following dietary requirements: